

this budget over the next 7 years and come up with a plan for reforming a number of areas of Government.

It is, I think, one of the most important times in our country's history, certainly from a financial standpoint and a long-term economic security standpoint. I think this debate is as important as the debate that occurred during the Great Depression when we were trying to right the ship of state and preserve a long-term future during that crisis.

We are at a similar crisis, I believe, in our country's time, with the mountains of debt that we continue to pile up, and, really, no end is in sight. The fact is that we have over half of our Government on automatic pilot, spending money without any idea of how much it is going to go up. We have projections that Medicare is going to go up 10 percent a year, Medicare 8 percent a year, whatever the case may be. But we do not know what it is. We add up the bills at the end of the year and that is what we pay out.

Can you imagine a family or a business saying, well, half of the money we spend, we have absolutely no idea what it is going to be at the end of the year because we promised people we were going to pay these things, and whether we have enough money or not, it does not matter because we promised we were going to pay it. That is the insanity we are in that causes the deficits to be at this level—now almost \$5 trillion in the national debt.

We have an opportunity to do something about that now. It is really the first time since I have been in the Congress—I was in the House 4 years prior to coming to the Senate. This is the first chance I have had to seriously address the issue which, when I first got elected to the House of Representatives, I promised I would come down here and do—to do things differently, to put our fiscal house in order, to establish America—as many speakers here talked about the moral authority of a Government that lived within its means and understands that we cannot continue to tax and penalize and put through very difficult times, because of the excesses of today. I think we have that moral obligation to act from that perspective.

We also have an obligation, I think, a moral obligation, to act from the perspective that we promised. We promised back in 1994—and many of us who ran for office promised many times throughout our careers—we promised to come to Washington and seek to balance the budget.

It is not an easy thing to do. I think if it was easy, it would have been done a long time ago. It is difficult. I think the American public understands it is difficult. But we promised. We have a Contract With America that says we will balance the budget.

I think almost every Member on this side, and I know many Members on the other side when they ran for election talked about how crucial it was for the

long-term future of this country to get our fiscal house in order and to balance the budget. We promised.

You can put up all the arguments, charts, and graphs and say we should do this because it will help future generations, we are going to do this because it will lower interest rates or it will create more economic growth, or we will get rid of wasteful programs or create more freedom and opportunity, we will reform the welfare system, we will save Medicare.

Those are all very good reasons to balance the budget. All very good reasons why we should act on the reconciliation package that will be coming up in the next several weeks. I have listed only a few. There are innumerable reasons why we should balance this budget. Possibly paramount among all of those is the fact that we promised.

One thing I have heard from people, whether it is Democrats or Republicans, liberals or conservatives, the reason they are so disgruntled with government, whether it is at the State or national level, is there is a lack of trust that people who get elected actually follow through with what they promised when they run their campaigns. There is a dislink. There is the politician the candidate, and then the politician the elected official. What one says during the campaign does not jive with what one does when they are elected to office.

We elect leaders of this country who promise all sorts of things and come down and do exactly the opposite. Then you ask people, how can you support someone who does that? Well, they all do it. It does not make any difference. They all say what they need to say to get elected. But they all do it. Why is he or she any worse than the rest? We can forgive that, I guess.

I think those days are gone. I do not think the public will forgive that any more. I do not think they should forgive it in the first place, and I hope they do not. I think the least people should expect out of their elected representatives is they keep their promises. We made 10 promises in a Contract With America. I think probably paramount of all those promises was to balance the budget.

Promises are important. If people do not have faith in their elected officials and institutions, that erosion of faith in support of our Government has very long-term consequences to the future and safety and freedom of this country.

This is a big one. This is not a little white promise, a little white lie that we will tell. This is a big one. This is a major promise that we made to the American public.

I heard a preacher the other day tell the story about this subject—not the balanced budget—but about the importance of that trust. He talked of a man who headed up a college, I believe it was in South Carolina, a Bible college.

His father had started this school, and all throughout his life growing up

his dream was to succeed his father and run this school where people would have their avocation to become preachers and ministers. This was very important for him. He felt it was a calling from God to do this.

He did. He succeeded his father in that position and ran that college very, very well. Unfortunately, his wife of many years contracted Alzheimer's disease. Alzheimer's is a devastating disease that eventually deteriorates the mind to the point where a person is no longer able to take care of themselves and needs full-time care. This happened to this woman at a very young age, unfortunately. She did deteriorate to the point where she was simply not able to take care of herself and needed full-time care.

This husband, the man who had been called to run this college, this passion of his, decided to resign as president of the college, to take the time and spend the time to take care of his wife, who was a victim of Alzheimer's.

His friends and people on the board of the college came up to him and said:

Why are you doing this? She has Alzheimer's. She has no idea who you are. She has no idea who is taking care of her. Anyone can take care of her. Anyone can take care of her. You have a calling. You are serving the Lord. You are doing what you are good at. You may be the only one who can do this. How can you leave that to do something that anyone can do?

He said two things. First, he said: "She may not know who I am, but I know who she is and I promised her when we got married to be there until death do us part. I promised."

Promises mean something. Promises are important for relationships, for the future of this country, between its elected representatives and the people. We promised. Now it is time to deliver. I yield the floor.

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I inquire of the Chair how much time is remaining on the time of the Senator from Wyoming?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time is 13 minutes 20 seconds.

RECONCILIATION

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I want to congratulate my freshman colleagues who have been on the floor the last hour. I think they have brought to the floor today an understanding of what this national debate that is going on is all about and what the debate that we will be having for the next few weeks in this Chamber is all about.

It is appropriate that the freshman Members, myself included, are making this debate today as we have in the past, because we were the ones who came through the last election and listened to what the American people had to say, as, of course, all our colleagues did. In a sense, we were a little closer to that.

My colleagues who preceded me today have talked very eloquently. I think if I could summarize, I would say